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ABSTRACT

Reading teachers need to have ample opportunities to experience professional growth. Teachers first need to experience excellent role models in reading instruction. Modeling new curriculum provides teachers opportunities to observe, reflect upon, and ask questions about proposed methods. Literature on new programs should also be passed out to teachers so they can study the principles and philosophy. Study groups and workshops for teachers can also facilitate improved reading instruction. Instruction improves when teachers trust each other and share teaching ideas with each other. Conferences between teachers and supervisors and effective orientation of new teachers also help improve reading instruction techniques. (PM)

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Inservice Development of Reading Teachers.

by Marlow Ediger

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INSERVICE DEVELOPMENT OF READING TEACHERS

Reading teachers need to have ample opportunities to experience professional growth in the curriculum. At a time when more is expected of teachers than ever before, it is necessary to truly become a quality teacher of reading. State mandated objectives are in evidence in almost all states in the union, each demanding students do well or, perhaps, not pass on to the next higher grade level or be refused a high school diploma in high stakes testing. The student also needs to be highly responsible to learn, achieve, and grow in reading accomplishment. Being able to read well is required in each academic area, as well as in the societal arena. Pre-school, full day kindergarten, and summer school should be available to all students. The reading curriculum needs to stress good, sequential learning opportunities so that learners may be successful in the school setting.

Reading Teachers Learn from Excellent Models

Teachers need to experience excellent role models in reading instruction. It is not adequate to have an educator lecture on the strong points of a new reading program to a set of teachers and expect the latter to be able to implement its objectives in teaching/learning situations. Modeling the new curriculum provides opportunities for teachers to observe, reflect upon, and ask questions about the proposed methods of reading instruction. By listening to the discussion, reading teachers may analyze and critically appraise the new program. Thinking about the new program of reading instruction gives the teacher a chance to notice what is not understood and then what needs further elaboration. Clarity and meaning are two worthwhile concepts here. To implement new ideas in the teaching of reading requires that teachers perceive the new program as being worthwhile in assisting students to do well in reading instruction.

Literature on the new program needs to be passed out to attending teachers so they may study the underlying principles of pupil learning and the involved philosophy in teaching and instruction. The content read and evaluated may then be integrated with the modeling procedure observed and resulting questions might be discussed. An indepth understanding is necessary. The reading teacher may then practice using the new approach in his/her classroom. Feedback from pupils taught provides the teacher initial ideas on the possible success of

the reading program. This information should be brought back to the inservice sessions on improving reading instruction (Ediger and Rao, 2000, Chapter Six).

Study Groups to Facilitate Reading Instruction

Reading teachers need to be involved in ongoing plans to improve reading instruction. Meeting dates need to be set and the place of these meetings must be clearly determined. It is good to have refreshments, in particular, if the meetings occur after the school day has been completed.

A clear agreed upon statement of purpose and vision needs to be established for conducting these meetings. Aimless sessions do not accomplish what is important and that being to provide the best reading instruction possible for pupils. The objectives for the sessions need to be challenging and yet achievable in the allotted time. Teacher education reading materials need to be in the offing and readily available to participants in the study groups. The study groups may engage in pursuing the following suggested topics, among others:

- * scripted reading programs, advantages and disadvantages
 - * multimedia approaches in reading instruction
 - * analysis of word recognition procedures
 - * higher levels of cognition and the pupil
 - * mandated objectives and meaningful reading instruction
- (Ediger and Rao, 2003, Chapter Four).

A topic named above may be chosen for one session or more, depending upon needed time. With each participant having read information pertaining to a topic, indepth discussions may be held. There might be ideas from reading which a participant might wish to incorporate. Thus, a plan of reading instruction may be used in teaching pupils in the classroom with a meaningful report of this plan presented to teacher participants. An analysis of the plan of reading needs to be presented in the report. The committee of teachers may then appraise what may be of worth to incorporate in the classroom.

Learning about new methodologies in teaching reading need to be discussed and evaluated. Enthusiasm for knowledgeable instruction of reading should be an end result (See Bisplinghoff).

A Hands On Workshop Approach in Reading Instruction

Most reading teachers desire to learn practical ideas in the teaching of reading. Ideas which might be tested and used in the classroom are very much wanted. Professional teachers desire to improve pupil reading abilities and skills. A workshop procedure might well be a useful approach to increase teaching of reading skills. A theme for the workshop needs to be developed such as, "innovation in Reading Instruction." The entire membership in the workshop needs to be involved in selecting the theme, as well as choose the topics to pursue within the workshop. Participants should have thought through the possibilities for needed topics in the workshop, prior to its beginning. From personal experiences in the classroom and vital topics pursued in personal reading about the teaching of literacy, each participant should be well versed on what is current to pursue in curricular improvement. An agenda needs to be developed at the workshop on possibilities in terms of topics to pursue. A motivated constituency needs to be in evidence at the workshop. The motivation must zero in on assisting each pupil to become a proficient reader. At one workshop attended by the author, the following topics were arrived at through discussion and thought:

- * Success for All, a commercial reading program.
- * Open Court, a highly scripted reading program.
- * Reading Recovery, a one on one program of reading instruction.
- * Creative procedures in using basals in the reading curriculum.
- * The reading and writing connection.

Once an adequate number of topics have been presented, and selections made, workshop members may choose to be a committee member to gather data on each. Perhaps, five to six participants may be on one committee. The contents for each topic need indepth analyzation. A thorough discussion of each plan, such as those listed above as examples, need to be in evidence. Generalizations achieved need to be presented by each committee to the total membership in the workshop. Ideas gleaned need to be tried out in the classroom. Evaluative results from the classroom provide feed back to workshop participants. The feed back may be discussed in order that participants obtain clarity on the possible use of an innovation, in whole or in part, in teaching and learning situations.

An evaluation procedure, carefully designed, should allow

participants to assess the quality and usefulness of the work shop. A five point Likert scale may be used to assess each listed numbered standard on a questionnaire. An open ended response section should also be on the questionnaire for the participant to state concerns and issues in reading which need to be appraised. The quality of the workshop, too, needs to be evaluated. A total program of evaluation needs to be in evidence in order that future workshops may increasingly be helpful to reading teachers.

The following organizational items need to be taken care of prior to the workshop:

1. times and places of work shop meetings.
2. a professional library for workshop use.
3. refreshments to be served to participants.
4. photocopying of needed papers from committees at work.
5. the design of the assessment procedure and document (See Applegate, et. al.).

Developing Trust Among Teachers

Too frequently mistrust is in evidence between and among teachers in the school setting. Teachers must work together in order to

- * share teaching ideas with others.
- * enjoy working with other professionals.
- * provide quality reading instruction in the classroom.
- * facilitate the work of the school.
- * work harmoniously in assisting pupils to achieve vital objectives in reading.

A survey needs to be conducted to ascertain strengths and weaknesses in developing trust among teachers. What might be done to improve quality human relations?

- * adequate planning time so that teachers may truly work together during this time.
- * a planning time might assist in reducing stress and fatigue.
- * refreshments to help teachers obtain increased energy during the school day.
- * available resources to assist teachers to do a good job of teaching. These resources include a quality school library, supplementary readers, as well as parents and teacher aide service to listen to children in small groups/individuals read aloud.

* retired teachers to help pupils in word recognition and comprehension skills (Ediger, 2003, 9- 15).

Teachers need to have an adequate voice in determining the conditions which assist pupils to achieve more optimally. A planned series of meetings need to be held for teachers to indicate what is needed to do a good job in the teaching of reading. School administrators and teachers need to work cooperatively in developing a quality curriculum. When working together, each person must be accepted as being important and having much worth intrinsically. Individuals and groups need to be praised for doing well. A pleasant speaking voice needs to be used to communicate ideas. Polite manners should be in evidence to indicate acceptance and belonging. There should be a desire to assist others to succeed optimally. Rudeness, embarrassing others, put downs, and ridiculing should not be in evidence. Individuals need to be assisted to develop a positive self concept. Getting along well with others is important! (See Ediger, 2003, 113- 116).

The Conference Setting

Conferences involving teachers and supervisors are significant to improve reading instruction. The supervisor and teacher need to work together to improve the curriculum. Observational visits to the classroom by the supervisor should focus on definite objectives, listed on the lesson plan by the teacher. The objectives need to be clarified so that the teacher and supervisor are clear on their meaning. Learning activities for pupils to achieve objectives, as given in the lesson plan, need analysis to notice if they are aligned with the stated objectives of instruction. The quality of these activities must be assessed in terms of desired criteria. The evaluation section of the lesson plan needs to indicate which assessment procedures will be used to ascertain learner achievement.

The supervisor then needs to observe teaching/learning situations in the classroom setting. The focal point of the observational visit will pertain to pupils individually and committees achieving objectives. After the observational visit, the supervisor and the teacher need to study what happened during instructional time. In this evaluation session, the supervisor and teacher will analyze answers to the following:

1. which specific objectives were achieved by pupils?
2. what can be done to assist learners to attain the remaining ends of instruction?

3. were the learning activities sequenced appropriately for pupils to be successful in achieving vital goals?

4. did all pupils feel responsibility to achieve the stated objectives?

5. how well did the evaluative techniques assist in measuring pupil achievement?

A journal needs to be kept pertaining to each observational visit made by the supervisor to the classroom setting.

Cumulative records make it possible to compare earlier dated visits made with those of later times to notice progress and achievement (See Felzer, 1998).

Orientation of New Teachers

New teachers need to experience an orientation which assists in developing quality teaching as well as feelings of belonging. The orientation must emphasize new teachers understanding laws pertaining to implementation of state mandated objectives of instruction, where needed things are for teaching such as construction paper, supplementary readers, and photocopying facilities. The orientation should also stress policies and services available such as guidance and counseling for pupils, mentoring for teachers, supervisory assistance, as well as school lunches for pupils and teachers.

New teachers should be made to feel at home. There needs to be ample opportunities for teachers to meet each other and develop feelings of being a community. The importance of good human relations should be stressed as being vital in the school and community setting.

Items to be placed on an orientation agenda should include the following:

1. indepth discussion of state mandated objectives and testing.

2. possible learning opportunities to assist pupils to achieve the mandated objectives.

3. stressing a child centered curriculum and using the psychology of learning in teaching pupils.

4. discipline policies in the school setting.

5. grouping pupils for optimal achievement and progress.

6. use of the school library.

The orientation program should assist new teachers to

1. develop a wholesome self concept.

2. achieve feelings of challenge in a professional

environment.

3. work effectively with others.

4. welcome and work with parents in a satisfying manner for those involved.

5. respect pupils and in return be respected by learners
(See also, Singh).

The school environment is a teaching and learning professional setting. Auxiliary services are there to assist pupils to achieve as optimally as possible. Quality human relations are necessary for all to achieve, develop, and learn.

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